

which is a rare bird in Zululand, as well as the very pretty "Blue birds," as we call the Glossy Thrush (*Pholidauges verreauxi*). We found here the stick-nest of the Hatadah Ibis in a tree overhanging a small stream. It contained two large eggs, green smeared and blotched with brown, measuring $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. The Common Oxpecker was nesting in the holes of trees; the eggs are white. The rarer species (*Buphaga africana*) we found only at the Umbegamusa, between the Black and White Umfolosi rivers. We got a nest of *Turdus libonyanus* near the river in one of the shrubs; it had four eggs, white blotched with red. There were a few of the Green-and-Yellow Parrot nesting in holes in dead trees in the open; we found one egg, pure white and nearly round. After a short stay here we returned to Eshowe.

XX.—*On the Grey Shrikes of Tunisia.*

By JOSEPH I. S. WHITAKER, F.Z.S.

IN my Notes on Tunisian Birds in 'The Ibis' for 1896 (p. 94) I referred to *Lanius fallax* a specimen of Grey Shrike which I had obtained the previous year in the South of the Regency, and which differed entirely from the ordinary form of Grey Shrike found in that country. In the course of a journey I made in the spring of the present year (1897), when travelling in a part of Central Tunisia not previously visited by me, I met with Grey Shrikes exactly similar in plumage-colouring and marking to the above-mentioned specimen referred by me to *L. fallax*. In the same district I also met with other Shrikes, some of which resembled more closely *L. algeriensis*, and some rather approximating to *L. elegans*. I found these birds in the district between Kairouan and Djilma, which immediately adjoins the southern spurs of the Eastern Atlas Mountains and lies between them and the more desert country further south. The character of the country in this district, as might be expected, partakes both of that of the Tell, or region north

of the Atlas (the true habitat of *L. algeriensis*), as well as of that of the semi-desert regions bordering the Tunisian Sahara, where *L. elegans* occurs. Its altitude is comparatively insignificant, being only a few hundred feet above sea-level, and very much below that of the High Plateau to the north and north-west, although always higher than the depressed plain of Kairouan and the low-lying country further east. Fairly well watered in winter and spring, this district has a tolerably luxuriant vegetation, vast stretches of corn-land occurring, interspersed with olive-groves, and plentifully dotted over with clumps of thick bushes, chiefly of *Zizyphus*, *Lotus*, and other thorny plants.

As stated in my 'Notes,' on comparing the specimen of doubtful Grey Shrike obtained from South Tunisia with examples of *L. fallax* in the British Museum, I found it agree so closely with some of them that I determined to refer it to this species. Having, however, now obtained similarly-plumaged birds from a district in Central Tunisia which may be considered the meeting-ground of the two species *L. algeriensis* and *L. elegans*, I am inclined to look upon these birds as being either hybrids between the two species, or else as belonging to intermediate forms modified according to the natural characteristics of the localities where they may occur; in any case I think it evident that they should not be referred to *L. fallax*, admitting this to be a good species, which is perhaps open to doubt.

Which of the two theories I have just mentioned may be the correct one I am not prepared to say, although the balance of evidence is perhaps somewhat in favour of the former. The theory of hybridism, unentertainable as it might be in certain cases, is certainly not improbable in a case like the present, where the two species in question are so closely allied, and where no sufficient natural boundary or division exists to keep them apart, for the Atlas Mountains in Tunisia do not form the same unbroken barrier that they do further west.

In favour of this theory, moreover, are the following facts: firstly, that, so far at any rate as I have been able to as-

certain, there does not seem to be a gradual continuity of intermediate forms connecting or uniting the two species; and secondly, that in the particular district where these non-descript birds occur we do not find one constant type, but individuals which vary in plumage among themselves, some resembling more *L. algeriensis*, and some *L. elegans*, and others again standing halfway between the two.

On the other hand, in support of the alternative theory of intermediate forms, may be adduced the argument that the difference between the two Shrikes, *L. algeriensis* and *L. elegans*, although sufficiently pronounced in typical examples, is after all merely one of plumage-colouring, or, to be more precise, I should say a difference in the shade of plumage-colouring and in the proportion of black and white markings, this difference being subject to modification according to the locality inhabited. Structurally there would appear to be no difference whatever between the two species. In the case of typically-plumaged birds, besides the very marked difference in the shade of the general grey colouring, both above and below, we have that of the marking of the wings and tail-feathers, there being, roughly speaking, more black and less white in *L. algeriensis*, and *vice versa* in *L. elegans*, and these points of difference seem to be fairly constant, so long as we confine ourselves to typical specimens. When, however, we leave these, we find the difference between the two species less marked and no longer constant; and when we come to birds like those occurring in the particular Central Tunisian district I have mentioned, it is absolutely impossible to decide to which of the two species they may belong.

At the same time I feel bound to confess that, until I met with these intermediate birds last spring, I never experienced any difficulty in referring specimens obtained to either one or the other of the two species.

The presence or absence of the white superciliary streak is not a distinguishing feature, as, although but faintly indicated, it is generally to be observed in specimens of *L. algeriensis* as well as in *L. elegans*.

In conclusion, I would say that, whatever may be the solution of the question, it is quite possible and even probable that a certain modification of plumage colouring occurs in both *L. algeriensis* and *L. elegans*, which is due solely to local causes, and this modification is perhaps greater in the case of the latter species, owing to its more extended range. I may add that I have examined a large series of Grey Shrikes from all parts of Tunisia, and have also compared the Tunisian birds with specimens from Algeria and Morocco. The Algerian and Tunisian Grey Shrikes appear to be identical. Those from Morocco are also identical so far as the north is concerned—that is to say, *L. algeriensis* is found in the north of Morocco precisely similar to *L. algeriensis* as found in the north of Algeria and Tunisia. Further south in Morocco, however, a somewhat different form occurs; but with regard to this I may have something more to say at a future date.

XXI.—*On the Nests and Eggs of some rare Philippine Birds.*

By W. R. OGILVIE GRANT and JOHN WHITEHEAD.

(Plates V. & VI.)

THE collecting and identification of birds' eggs on the great forest-covered islands of the Equatorial East is by no means so easy as it is in more northern latitudes, where nearly all birds are obliged to nest during the warm season of the year, and, with most species, their young must be sufficiently advanced to enable them to cover the enormous distances of their autumnal migrations. The necessity for a general breeding-season is especially noticeable among the many thousands of birds which retire annually to the circumpolar region in the months of April and May, and return southward, with their full-grown young, about the middle of August or in September.

In tropical countries there is no forced migration or danger to backward young through climatic reasons, and birds' nests containing eggs or young may be met with in